United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1538
9 December 1993

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- ACABQ, in report to Fifth Committee, recommends overall regular budget spending of $2.56 billion for 1994-1995 biennium, reflecting reduction of $186 million from Secretary-General's proposal; recommends lifting of recruitment freeze because of expanding United Nations duties.

- General Assembly President announces lifting of oil embargo against South Africa following first meeting of country's Transitional Executive Council on Tuesday.

- Disarmament Commission decides to hold 1994 substantive session in New York from 18 April to 9 May; to address process of nuclear disarmament, role of science and technology in disarmament, and international arms transfers.

- Third Committee approves draft resolution strongly condemning human rights violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), recognizing that Serbs bear main responsibility for them.

- UNESCO World Education Report shows steady reduction in global illiteracy; Director-General says progress results from alliance created at 1990 World Conference on Education and recognition that education is crucial for development.

* * *

The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) has recommended an overall regular budget expenditure of $2.56 billion for the biennium 1994-1995, a reduction of more than $186.47 million from the Secretary-General's proposal. In its report, presented to the Fifth Committee (Advisory and Budgetary) yesterday, the Advisory Committee also recommends that the recruitment freeze, in place since February 1992, be lifted because of expanding United Nations responsibilities.

(more)

United Nations Controller Yukio Takasu told the Committee that the Secretary-General had taken into account priorities adopted by the General Assembly in the preparation of his proposed budget. He said too that the Secretary-General intended to lift the recruitment freeze when his proposed 1994-1995 programme budget was approved.

Speakers responding to the report reflected Member States' different priorities. Pakistan said that the expansion of United Nations peace-keeping and related activities should not be at the expense of social and economic tasks. Ethiopia said that the economic recovery of Africa and environmental preservation were essential budget priorities. Its representative favoured the strengthening of allocations for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said that increased preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping justified the strengthening of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations.

* * *

General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) today announced the lifting of the oil embargo on the supply of petroleum and petroleum products to South Africa, and on investment in the petroleum industry there. The Assembly, by resolution A/48/1 of 8 October, had decided that the embargo would cease to have effect once South Africa's Transitional Executive Council had become operational, in view of constitutional and other developments there.

Mr. Insanally told the Assembly that he had been informed by the Special Committee on Apartheid and the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa that the country's Transitional Executive Council was now operational. He had also been informed by South Africa's Permanent Representative to the United Nations that the Council had met on Tuesday.

Today's statement marks the end of all General Assembly sanctions against South Africa. Those measures were first imposed against the country in 1962 and were expanded over the years as the international community sought ways to end the system of apartheid. In December 1991, following the repeal or revision of the major racial segregation and security laws, the Assembly lifted the academic, scientific and cultural boycott of the country. On 8 October this year economic sanctions were lifted.

* * *

The Disarmament Commission today approved the provisional agenda for its 1994 substantive session, to be held in New York from 18 April to 9 May. The Commission agreed to address the following three items during the session: the process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons; the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament; and international arms transfers.

(more)

The decision on the provisional agenda was taken after the Commission held an extended discussion on the appropriateness of taking up the new item on international arms transfers, as recommended by the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security).

* * *

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) yesterday approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would condemn in the strongest terms human rights violations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), recognizing that the Serbs bore primary responsibility for those violations. The draft, which was approved without a vote, would have the Assembly condemn killings, torture, rape, disappearances, detentions and other acts of violence, mostly connected to "ethnic cleansing". It would urge that that practice be ended immediately, and that the authorities of the Federal Republic use their influence to reverse its effects. Those authorities would also be urged to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo.

By the draft, the international community would be urged to provide information relating to violators of international humanitarian law to the International Tribunal investigating those crimes. All parties would be urged to immediately notify the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) of the locations of all camps, prisons and other places of detention and grant access to them.

* * *

There has been a continuing reduction in the number of illiterate people in the world, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Presenting UNESCO's World Education Report earlier this week, Director-General Federico Mayor said the reduction showed the positive results of "the great alliance" established during the World Conference on Education which took place in Thailand in 1990. It also showed the political will of those countries which had realized that the education of their citizens was "the only door leading to endogenous development".

However, Mr. Mayor continued, the report also contained exceptions to the good news, one of them being the "deep wound" which Africa represented in the overall positive picture. Increasingly, educational disparities within the South represented the basic obstacle to overcoming what remained of its knowledge gap with the North. He suggested that those disparities were a disturbing signal of profound change in global economic, social and cultural relations. In addition to Africa, south Asia and the Arab States also had rising levels of adult illiteracy. Regarding developed countries, the report drew attention to the desperate situation in some state education systems, where conditions in city schools might include drug abuse, violence, gangs, policemen in the hallways, intimidated teachers and terrified pupils.

* *** *